

CREATIVITY IN THE ANALYST

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When I received the invitation to participate in this panel, I decided I was not going to discuss the aesthetic aspect of my technique during analysis. Working alone and also with Dr. Beres, I have touched upon that subject in several publications. Nor did I want to consider contributions I provided on invitation, like papers for a panel or articles for a journal. Perhaps as a true romantic, I wanted to consider how some things came into being as a result of an impulse that arose within me. I decided to discuss the subjective experience of my creativity.

I had no difficulty choosing where to start. I decided I would describe and analyze how I came to write one of my first papers, entitled "The Consecration of the Prophet." Even at the time I wrote it I was quite aware that it was a gift to my second analyst, Dr. Loewenstein, on the successful conclusion of my treatment. I described the experience of consecration as a dramatic one, a commingling of passive-submissive abnegation with ecstatic grandeur, in which the future prophet accepts the burden of his calling. By having the word of the Lord thrust into his mouth, he becomes a spokesman for God, thereby also sharing his powers. A model for this interaction I saw in certain forms of how the Oedipus struggle may be resolved, situations in which the son, overcome by fear and guilt, surrenders his active, aggressive, masculine strivings by becoming passive, masochistic and, as it

-2-

were, feminine, and seeks reunion and reconciliation with a loving and forgiving father. ^{Further} I understood the true prophet of Israel to be the one who correctly divined and articulated the emerging, as yet unspoken, moral vision of the people. Borrowing an ^{image} ~~idea~~ from O'Shaughnessy's "Ode to the Music Makers," of how the poets and prophets are "the movers and shakers of the world forever," I next thought of the concluding lines of the poem, "Each age is a dream that is dying/Or one that is coming to birth." I ended my paper with a metaphoric image, to wit, "at the threshold of the ages stands the prophet, midwife of humanity's dreams." I was not too surprised to realize that, in so doing, I had conjured up an image of the prophet as feminine and life-giving. With these thoughts in mind, I decided to call Dr. Stein and let him know that I would participate in this panel.

Four days later I had an experience which occurs to me quite regularly when I am engaged in some creative endeavor. I awoke in the middle of the night, around 3:30 or 4:00, to find that my mind had been working very actively on the problem of creativity without my having been there. It was as if some force independent of me had taken over the task. My usual routine, when working on a problem, is to think about it and occasionally to jot down some notes, but when I find myself waking up in the middle of the night, having formed sentences and paragraphs in my mind, I know that it is time to write the paper. So on this occasion I awoke to find

-3-

myself organizing material for this paper, elaborating on the problem and searching for examples. The concept that I had elucidated in the psychology of the prophet, I realized, was identical to the issues that dominated a large portion of my own analysis. I thought of the metaphor of the prophet as midwife and I realized that the paper itself constituted a metaphoric apprehension of my analysis. The creative process, I felt, seems to consist of an aesthetic transformation of the metaphoric image.*

Thinking of the prophet as a metaphoric expression of unconscious conflicts brought to mind another experience, in which a perceived and appreciated metaphor anticipated the creative work. I do not recall the precise circumstances under which this experience occurred but, riding to work one day with my friend, Irv Clyne, I told him that I had hit upon a concept for a piece of sculpture, a concept that I said was based upon a metaphor. The prophetic vision of the ancient Hebrew prophets, I said, was an explosion in the moral conscience of mankind. Since the prophet's instrument was speech, in the sculpture the epicenter of the explosion was to be his mouth, and the features of his face and his beard I intended to radiate outward from his mouth, as if driven by the explosive force of his moral indignation. His vision of morality was his inner vision and, as such, I wanted to suggest that, while he was proclaiming his message outwardly, it was a reflection of his looking inwardly. His eyes, I resolved, should be hollow and unfocused. So, while it had taken me months to

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-3-

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-4-

complete two earlier busts I had made, this time the task required only a few weeks. I chose the words of the Prophet Jeremiah not because he is the most poetic, but because, of the ancient prophets, he is the most passionate. I had in mind a specific outcry: "My bowels, my bowels, I am pained to my very heart. My heart breaks within me. I cannot hold my peace because you have heard, oh my soul, the sound of the trumpets, the call to war" (Jeremiah, Chapter 4, Verse 19).

(Show picture)

Still in bed during the early hours of the morning, I smiled to myself when I realized that, for the memorial meeting after my analyst's death, I contributed a paper entitled "Metaphor and the Psychoanalytic Situation," and, while preparing for this meeting, I realized that Dr. Loewenstein had written a paper called "Some Remarks on the Role of Speech in Psychoanalytic Technique," in which one of his ideas suggested to me some of the thoughts I later developed in my paper on metaphor.

Still ruminating in bed, I began to wonder if Melanie Klein was correct when she said that creative activity regularly represents attempts at restitution of a lost object or perhaps additional functions might be served, using creativity as a compromise formation to resolve conflicts of a different nature. I thought of a creative experience of ~~attenuated~~ ^{which} vengefulness I had used to master aggressive hostility. I had been invited by the Curriculum Committee of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute to

-5-

present certain ideas that I had on reorganizing the curriculum. I had in my mind the outlines of an elaborate plan of tracking courses in psychoanalytic training. The first track would concern the evolution of psychoanalytic concepts and, as I began the presentation of this track, I suggested that some of the texts we have candidates read are antiquated and should be covered only in a cursory or summary fashion. This applied particularly to some of the early papers by Freud. The discussion never got beyond that point. For two hours, the members of the committee defended the usefulness of reading all the original texts. There wasn't one paper ^{IV} of the syllabus they could conceive of omitting. When I left this futile encounter, I was, to say the least, very angry and I felt roiled for several days. In that spirit, I wrote a parody-fantasy of an unnamed candidate applying for membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association. He presents four cases as examples of his analytic work. The chairman of the Membership Committee writes to the applicant, praising the clarity of his presentations and the richness of style but calls attention to major flaws in each of the four cases presented. While the applicant was turned down, the chairman nevertheless urged him to keep in touch with the committee. He also made a special request of the applicant. In the light of his clear and convincing literary style, he asked permission to use the four case histories for teaching purposes at the Institute. The applicant, of course, was Dr. Sigmund Freud. Through humorous ridicule, I had effected

-6-

an adaptive compromise formation. I had no intention of publishing this bit of revenge on the Curriculum Committee until some years later, when I was invited to do the graduation address at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, I made this personal exercise the centerpiece of my talk. This, I told myself in the early morning, was an example of creativity in the service of compromise and adaptation.

For purposes of conforming with the time schedule, I will omit another example of the same process that came to mind in the pre-dawn dialog. My muse reminded me that, under special circumstances, creativity may be enlisted in the service of overcoming anxiety, specifically the fear of death. Since 1977, after a series of life-threatening cardiac arrests, I have been outfitted with an implanted pacemaker. Once a month, according to the prescribed clinical routine, the functioning of the pacemaker is monitored by telephone. In the earlier days, I used to attach electrodes to each wrist and, at the appointed hour, each month at the same time, the telephone would ring and the same female voice, whose name I never knew, would inquire if I were ready. Also as part of the routine, I would place a magnet over my pacemaker, which is located in the right upper quadrant of my chest. In those days, the magnet was black and rather large, the size of a baby's head. According to the ^{EKG}electrographic tracings all my beats were being initiated by the pacemaker. In other words, I was completely dependent upon it, not a very comforting idea. The entire

-7-

experience struck me as unnatural and awesome, but I added a touch of erotic fantasy. While it was a constant reminder of my mortality, it seemed to have its bizarre and amusing aspects. Accordingly, I wrote the following poem.

TO THE WOMAN AT THE OTHER END OF THE WIRE WHO MONITORS
MY PACEMAKER

I press your magnet to my breast,
But we're so far apart.
I telephone to let you know
What's stirring in my heart.
As these electric shackles
I fasten to each wrist,
My heartbeats skip as I await
Our cardiographic tryst.
While from deep within my bosom's core
The cybernetic code
Bears the message of the failure
Of my sino-auricular node,
How strange this inert metal rod
This mute implanted cardiac pole
Communes with you, my unseen friend,
Who monitors my soul!
My myocardium avows
The truth of every tracing
Will you in turn assure me that
My maker will keep pacing?"

-8-

It should be noted that the first stanza that came to my mind was, "How strange this inert metal rod, this mute implanted cardiac pole, communes with you, my unseen friend, who monitors my soul." The rest of the poem came later, as a humorous elaboration of the underlying anxiety. Here were humor and creativity enlisted in the service of defense. It was not mere doggerel. The distant, unseen woman who holds the electrical thread of my mortality clearly corresponds to the third of the Three Fates, whom Freud discussed in "The Theme of the Three Caskets." There will come a time when the electrical thread will be cut. Death is the ultimate tryst. Here we are reminded of Hans Sachs' reflections on creativity. "Beauty," he said, "is life dancing, dancing to the tune of death." And to this I would append the last sentence of my paper on "Disturbances of the Sense of Time": "The illusion of capturing a moment of joyous self-awareness and giving it concrete, if inanimate, but ageless form is how the poet defies time and offers man a meager promise of the immortality he seeks."